

HIST 323: COLONIAL AMERICA

Dr. Jason Sellers

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*please allow at least 24 hours for me to respond (I will usually be quicker)

Office: 218 Monroe Hall

Class times/locations: TR 11a-12:15p, Monroe 210

Office Hours: MWF 10:30-11:30, TR 2-3, and by appointment

Course description:

This course will approach colonial America, not as a prologue to the American Revolution and the history of the United States, but rather as a period and place unique in terms of its fluidity and multifaceted cultural influences. We will consider how people of Native American, European, and African descent shaped and were shaped by colonial America's environmental, social, cultural, and economic realms, and how those experiences changed over the course of the colonial era. Students and the professor will work together to identify topics of interest and appropriate readings, and build out the schedule below; the professor will help design that to introduce students to a wide range of historical perspectives and methodological approaches, rather than to comprehensively address every available topic. This course is designed to center on discussions rather than lectures, and participation is expected.

Course objectives and outcomes:

Students in this course will acquire/develop:

- Understanding and appreciation of the discipline's diverse methods and processes.
- Ability to locate, read critically, and analyze primary sources and modern scholarship.
- Ability to synthesize research findings.
- Comprehension of historical process.
- Ability to write with clarity about the past, and to communicate in a group setting.

This course counts in the History major.

Readings:

Required texts:

1. Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011)
2. Most of this course's readings will be accessible through the library website or posted on Canvas, and will be listed on the final version of the syllabus, which the class and professor will work together to construct—see the schedule below.

Grading and Participation:

Participation:	20%
Article summaries:	20%
Primary source essay:	30%
Final essay:	20%
Final exam:	10%

Students must complete all required assignments to receive a passing grade in the class.

Limited extra credit opportunities will be announced during the semester. Additionally, you may revise one written assignment for a higher grade and turn it in within one week of the original assignment's return. If you elect to do so, you will need to submit the new assignment and a short (1/2 page) description of how you revised your work (see handout on Canvas), and include the original assignment with my feedback. It may be helpful to meet with me to make sure you understand what needs to be addressed. This option is not available if the original submission was late.

Students who have missed more than 5 classes, and/or who have not submitted any assignments receiving passing grades, will be reported as *unsatisfactory* on mid-semester reports. Numerical grades in this course correspond to the following letter grades: A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (60-66); F (59 and below). I do not round grades, so for instance, a 79.7% is a C+.

Assignments:

*More detailed descriptions and grading breakdowns will be posted on Canvas.

**Please submit your written work electronically via email or Canvas upload.

1) Participation: Attendance will be taken regularly, and you are expected to attend having completed the assigned reading for that day so that you can contribute to discussions. This component of your overall grade will consider attendance, active participation in group work and larger classroom discussions, and your contributions to researching and scheduling class readings. After the second absence, additional absences will result in the loss of 1/10 of your participation points. Although I will sometimes lecture briefly, the majority of the class will be discussion, and so effective participation will be an important and substantial part of your overall grade. If it becomes clear from discussions that students are not completing the readings, I reserve the right to substitute reading quizzes (graded P/F) in place of simple attendance. To avoid quizzes, please actively contribute to conversations with your questions and ideas. I realize some students tend to be quieter in class, and I encourage those of you who are to meet with me early in the term to discuss how we can facilitate your participation.

2) Article summaries: Students will write five 200-word (yes, I'll count words) summaries of our selected articles, distributed across all three units of the semester. Each summary should include a correct citation (not part of the word count), *succinctly* convey the author's argument (not topic) and major points (including any significant names/dates/locations), identify the author's historiographical intervention, and briefly address her/his evidence and methodologies. In addition to submitting summaries to the instructor, students will post them anonymously to a shared Google Doc for the class to reference. We will practice this during the first weeks of class in preparation for your independent work.

3) Primary source essay: This 4-5 page essay will present a unique argument based on evidence from an assigned/discussed primary source, while drawing on the accompanying/appropriate scholarly work to provide context and analytical approaches. The class will work with these documents, including extensively annotating some, and students are welcome to draw on those annotations and discussions as they develop their own essays.

4) Final essay: This take-home essay will be due at the beginning of the final exam period. It will ask students to use our class materials (Richter, primary source documents, articles, and discussions) to address change and continuity over our three chronological periods, centering

their discussion on one of our major topics. We will identify possibilities over the course of the semester, and you will receive final instructions one week before the due date (so Dec. 6)

5) Final exam: This will consist of an in-class written response to a primary source document, asking you to carefully analyze it and address its significance for understanding colonial American history.

If you think you may need an extension, you *must* request it in advance; I will not grant extensions after assignments are due. If you are having printer problems, or for some reason are unable to attend class, email the electronic file to me as a Word document before class time, and bring a paper copy when you are able. If the assignment is not in my possession in some form at the time it is due, it will be considered late. Late assignments will receive an automatic deduction of one-third of a letter grade, and an additional deduction every day thereafter; I will not accept assignments that are more than one week late.

While I am willing to discuss assignment grades with students, you will need to wait at least 24 hours and have carefully reviewed my comments on your work. You have one week after the return of graded assignments to speak with me; after one week, grades are final.

Requirements for written assignments:

All assignments should adhere to the department's standard style: 1" margins; 12 pt. Times New Roman font; a title page including the paper title the author's name (centered, all caps), course number and title, instructor, and date; pages numbered consecutively through all materials, excluding title page; and a bibliography conforming to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For more information on proper bibliographic format for your sources, consult Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, or an equivalent abridgement of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. [Note the most recent versions of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th) and Turabian (7th) include updated information for electronic citations. Be sure to use the newest editions.] A helpful UMW library guide to citations is available at

<http://libguides.umw.edu/content.php?pid=245752&sid=2029722#6812498>

Students with Disabilities:

The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through the Office of Disability Resources and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not contacted the Office of Disability Resources and need accommodations, I will be happy to help you contact it. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. The office is located in 401 Lee Hall, and can be reached by phone at 540.654.1266 and email at ods@umw.edu.

Honor System:

Please write and sign the University of Mary Washington honor pledge ("I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work") on every written assignment. More information about the Honor System is available at

<http://students.umw.edu/fredericksburghonorcouncil/> You are welcome to discuss your work on assignments with classmates and work together to refine your writing, but your ideas and language must be your own.

Class and Reading Schedule:

* While I will sometimes lecture briefly, most of our time in class will consist of discussions, which depend on your ability to engage with the readings. To facilitate that engagement, please bring the readings (or at least your meticulous notes) to class so that you may refer to them as we discuss—it is fine to load them on your laptop, e-reader, tablet, etc.

Unit 1: American and European background, exploration, and early contacts

*During this Unit, we will also specifically model approaches to the written assignments, including collectively writing at least one article summary, and working in small groups and as a class to annotate primary source documents.

Week 1

T 8/30: Introductions, syllabus, and semester plan

R 9/1: Richter, *Before the Revolution*, Progenitors and Conquistadors (11-117)

For this class meeting:

1. Students will read the assigned sections of Richter, paying attention to the general overview and argument but not getting too wrapped up in specific details. Look for topics, events, and historical figures that are (a) quirky, interesting, or (b) most important to the place and time we're studying. Basically, look for things in the Richter that the class might be interested in studying in more depth. Note the pages on which these things appear, and any more pertinent information.
2. We will discuss your interests in class, driven by what you think is important, interesting, etc., to generate a list of topics on which we need to find readings. We will also arrange these topics to fit our schedule. I will post this schedule for you to refer to as you prepare for the next class meeting.

Week 2

T 9/6: Scheduling Unit 1

For this class meeting:

1. Students will use the citations in Richter, as well as UMW library search tools such as Quest, to independently research the topics we've designed into our schedule. Students will identify appropriate academic book chapters and scholarly articles, and then paste the basic information (author, title, journal, date) and a 1-sentence description or the article abstract into a shared Google Doc under the topic/day to which the article pertains. Articles/chapters must have been published after 1990, and generally should not be review/historiographic essays (the instructor may make exceptions, but students need to communicate directly to request that). Each student should contribute at least two UNIQUE articles (if you find one that has already been posted, you need to find something else), and they should be on different topics. This will not be graded, but will count as your participation, so put your name alongside your contributions.
2. As a class, we will discuss the lists and descriptions and select 2 articles for each topic/day (we may occasionally make an exception on that number). We will also

discuss the types of primary sources we might find related to those topics, and possible “mini-lectures” that would supplement the selected articles. The professor will then provide those and post the final schedule for the unit.

R 9/8:

Daily schedule for each class meeting will entail:

1. Article discussions
2. Short lecture or primary source work
3. Closing comments/reflection—keywords, further directions/questions

Week 3

T 9/13:

R 9/15:

Week 4

T 9/20:

R 9/22:

Unit 2: Developing colonial models

Week 5

T 9/28: Richter, *Before the Revolution*, Traders and Planters (121-238)

R 9/30: NO CLASS; Unit 1 assignments due (1 article summary, Primary Source Essay if you've chosen to write on a document from Unit 1)

Week 6

T 10/4: Scheduling Unit 2

R 10/6:

Week 7

T 10/10:

R 10/14:

Week 8

T 10/18: NO CLASS--Fall Break

R 10/20:

Week 9

T 10/25:

R 10/27:

Unit 3: Empire and nation

Week 10

T 11/1: Unit 2 assignments due (2 summaries, Primary Source Essay)

R 11/3: Richter, *Before the Revolution*, Imperialists and Atlanteans (241-414)

Week 11

T 11/8: Scheduling Unit 3

R 11/10: NO CLASS

Week 12

T 11/15:

R 11/17:

Week 13

T 11/22:

R 11/24: NO CLASS--Thanksgiving

Week 14

T 11/29:

R 12/1:

Week 15

T 12/6: Final essay/exam instructions; Unit 3 assignments due (2 summaries, Primary Source Essay)

R 12/8:

Final exam: Tuesday, Dec. 13, 12-2:30pm